

Post 7/20/72
"Farewell For Now"

Are there innocent people in jail? Yes. I'm one of them. I'm known as "John Patler." My real name, though, is John Patsalos.

Soon I will be taken to the Virginia penitentiary to begin serving a 20-year sentence for a crime I did not commit. It is like some incredible nightmare.

Whatever else I might be, I am not a murderer. I did not shoot George Lincoln Rockwell. I am not guilty of this crime. For what it's worth, that's the truth! I've said this over and over so often I've grown weary... No one listens; no one cares. I feel like a voice in the wilderness. It seems most people are inclined to believe that if you are convicted you must be guilty. The truth doesn't seem to matter any more. It hurts more than you can imagine when your integrity is impugned and when your word is accepted as worthless—especially when you've told the truth from the beginning.

It should be that when you stand up and declare your innocence, the courts should bend over backwards to afford you all benefit of doubt and every opportunity to establish your innocence—even beyond conviction. Such a person should not have to spend one moment in jail until all appeals and all legal litigation in the quest for justice are exhausted. But, it doesn't happen that way. In fact, just the opposite occurs. A person who pleads guilty and thereby relieves the courts of the "trouble" of going to trial, receives a light sentence and in most instances, part of their sentence is suspended. On the other hand, an innocent person who pleads innocent AND loses, must pay the FULL penalty and receives no breaks or bargains. Nothing is so unfair or as lopsided as this practice under our system of law.

I have been waiting five long years for justice, yet justice has eluded me. More than two of those years I've spent sitting and waiting in the Arlington County Jail. Somewhere, somehow, I hope justice will find me soon. I will never give up looking for it no matter how long it takes or how long I must stay in prison.

And prison will never change the worthwhile human being I've become. I've come a long, long way and I have succeeded in my struggle to free myself of my own self-hate, to finally find myself. I have won my long battle with my infection by the disease of racism and now I am prepared for one more struggle, one last hurdle to happiness and fulfillment and I expect ultimately to win it and absolve myself of this vicious crime.

In the meantime, I bid you farewell for now, and I thank you for your fair news coverage of my case over these many years.

JOHN PATSALOS,
Arlington County Jail.